

Better Together VCS Forum Notes – 11 February 2025

Agenda Item	Key Issues
Welcome & introductions	Apologies were received from 15 organisations including from Kate Burrows. In her absence Abby welcomed everyone to the meeting at the Sjøvoll Centre and thanked them for their hospitality. 14 people attended and introductions were made.
Social Housing Allocations Policy	<p>John Kelly, DCC Service Development and Intelligence Manager, attended the meeting to provide a presentation on the current Social Housing Allocations Policy Review. A copy of the presentation can be found here.</p> <p>The Allocations Policy (Durham Key Options Scheme) is a set of rules on how social houses are advertised and allocated to those on the housing register. John explained that there are currently 11,000 people on the waiting list in County Durham and his presentation outlined the 6 key issues that the Council want to consider in reviewing the policy.</p> <p>Phase 1 of the consultation will run until the 12th March and can be found here. Forum members are encouraged to share the survey with colleagues.</p>
Moving Together in County Durham	<p>Kelly Rose, DCC Public Health Practitioner attended the meeting to update group members about the Moving Together Strategy which aims to help residents become more active to improve health and wellbeing by increasing physical activity. It focuses on reducing inactivity, especially among children and disadvantaged groups, through community engagement, partnerships and accessible environments. Kelly referred to the physical activity data which is available for everyone to view and can be found on Durham Insight here.</p> <p>Kelly's presentation can be found here, along with the animations from the presentation.</p>
Update on Social Value Impact Measurement Project	<p>Jo Laverick gave an update on the work that she has undertaken considering tools for measuring social value impact. Jo gave a presentation which can be found here. DCA have bought a license from Social Value Engine, and have ran several tests including one with the Durham Cree Project and Advice in County Durham. Jo's presentation touched upon the value of conducting a social value test, such as providing evidence for funders or for organisation introspection but commented that the exercise is time consuming.</p> <p>Jo reported that insights and contributions from VCSE and Commissioners will be collated with draft recommendations made in a full report due at the end of February. The license costs for the social value engine tool are around £1,000 for anyone wishing to consider purchasing it themselves.</p>
Safeguarding Update	Eight people attended the safeguarding meeting prior to the main meeting. There was a discussion regarding safeguarding training and a call for e-learning for safeguarding particularly for those who volunteer outside of work time to access the training. Abby

	<p>agreed she will ask Pam Jobbins (Training and Development Officer for the Safeguarding Adults Board), to come to a future safeguarding meeting. Action: Abby to note.</p> <p>Details of available training can be found here including the Toxic Cultures training course: Training - Durham Safeguarding Adults</p> <p>There was also a discussion regarding the issue of balancing wages and benefits for volunteers due to the increase in part time working hours and it was suggested that a representative from the DWP would be invited to a future meeting to talk about benefits for volunteers. Action: Abby to consider this.</p>
<p>Partners Update</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alzheimer’s Society are currently trialling equipment for people such as sensor lights, and Timepals and small pieces of equipment to help people in their homes. Dementia Action week was noted for 19th May. • Bridge Creative are launching their Bridge Academy programme which offers vocational training courses and Inclusive Apprenticeships to people with learning disabilities and autistic adults. They are asking partners for referrals for any clients that they are working with who are 18+ that they feel would benefit from the programme. • Communities Together County Durham – a new team has been drawn together. Any organisation wishing to work with the church on joint projects should contact Maddy Fisher. • County Durham Sport will be merging with RISE NorthEast in April. This will provide more support and resources but work will still be focused on County Durham. A focus on supporting young people and a pilot in Peterlee will help to shape placework county wide. Further details will be shared in due course. • Durham Christian Partnership – it was noted that Peter McLellan has now retired from DCP. The interim CEO is Glenn Jones. • Investing in Children – Art work from the Art Café has been displayed in an exhibition at Bishop Auckland Town Hall attracting more than 8,700 visitors. A new build facility funded through the Youth Improvement Fund is opening in Kimblesworth. • NE Youth Durham YouthPrint Conference taking place on Wednesday 26th March from 9.30am - 4.00pm at The Durham Centre. • Supportive – continue to provide community transport and are open to suggestions to draw in volunteers to support provision. • Wheels to Work have 10 extra vehicles in their fleet and 100 bicycles. Anyone who feels a client could benefit from the scheme should refer them in via their website.
<p>Other Business</p>	<p>No items.</p>
<p>Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>The next meeting of the Better Together Forum will be the Policy Forum which will be held on Thursday April 10th in the Derwent Room, Spennymoor Leadership and Development Centre. The next ordinary Forum meeting will be held on Tuesday 17th June. The venue for this meeting will need to be confirmed and Forum members are requested let Vicky know if they are able to host the meeting.</p>